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# Welcome to Freedom House

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## Mission Statement:

Freedom House is an independent non-governmental organization that supports the expansion of freedom in the world. Freedom is possible only in democratic political systems in which the governments are accountable to their own people; the rule of law prevails; and freedoms of expression, association, belief and respect for the rights of minorities and women are guaranteed.

Freedom ultimately depends on the actions of committed and courageous men and women. We support nonviolent civic initiatives in societies where freedom is denied or under threat and we stand in opposition to ideas and forces that challenge the right of all people to be free. Freedom House functions as a catalyst for freedom, democracy, and the rule of law through its analysis, advocacy, and action.

Freedom House is a clear voice for democracy and freedom around the world. Founded in 1941 by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and other Americans concerned with the mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right.

Since its founding, Freedom House has vigorously opposed tyranny including dictatorships in Latin America, apartheid in South Africa, and Soviet Communism and domination of Eastern and Central Europe, and religiously-based totalitarian regimes including Sudan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia.

Freedom House is a leading advocate of the world's young democracies that are coping with the debilitating legacies of tyranny, dictatorship, and political repression. We conduct an array of advocacy, education, and training initiatives that promote human rights, democracy, free market economics, the rule of law, independent media, and US engagement in international affairs.

Freedom House's annual standard-setting publications draw attention to global trends in democracy and cast a public light upon dictatorships and abuse. *Freedom in the World*, *Freedom of the Press*, *Nations in Transit*, and *Crossroads* are regularly used as references by international journalists, press freedom advocates, policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, the US government, and the global business community.

Our diverse Board of Trustees is united in the view that American leadership in international affairs is essential to the cause of human rights and freedom. The board is composed of business and labor leaders, former senior government officials, scholars, writers, and journalists.

More information about **Freedom House's history** is available.

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In 1973, Freedom House launched its annual survey of global political rights and civil liberties, *Freedom in the World*. Employing a methodology that had been devised by leading social scientists, the survey rated every country in the world on a series of indicators basic to freedom. Published annually, it provided policymakers, journalists, and the public a comparative view

During the 1970s, Freedom House became concerned about the erosion of freedom in many parts of the developing world. With Marxist regimes, juntas, and military strongmen holding sway over swathes of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America, Freedom House responded with a program that combined research and analysis, advocacy, and on-the-ground involvement in crisis areas.

During the 1950s, Freedom House was an aggressive foe of McCarthyism. It was also an early supporter of the movement for racial equality. Through the years, most notably House has included among its leadership prominent civil rights leaders, most notably Roy Wilkins, the director of the NAACP, and Bayard Rustin, a leading adviser to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Having been launched in response to the threat posed by one great totalitarian evil, Nazism, Freedom House took up the struggle against the other twentieth century totalitarian threat, Communism, after the conclusion of World War II. The organization's leadership was convinced that the spread of democracy would be the best weapon against totalitarian ideologies. Freedom House thus embraced a mission to work to expand freedom around the world and to strengthen human rights and civil liberties in the United States. Freedom House thus strongly endorsed the post-war Atlantic Alliance, as well as such key policies and institutions as the Marshall Plan and NATO.



From the outset, Freedom House was notable for its bipartisan character. In its early years, its board of trustees was drawn from a broad and eclectic group of prominent Americans: leaders from business and labor, journalists, academics, former government officials. A key figure among its early leaders was Wendell Willkie, the Republican presidential nominee in 1940. Eleanor Roosevelt was also a strong supporter and served as honorary chairman in the organization's early years.

Freedom House was established in 1941 in New York City. It emerged from an amalgamation of two groups that had been formed, with the quiet encouragement of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, to encourage popular support for American involvement in World War II at a time when isolationist sentiments were running high in the United States.

## Freedom House: A History

PRINT VERSION

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Freedom House has also substantially expanded its research on various aspects of freedom. Its flagship survey, *Freedom in the World*, was chosen as a formal source for the determination of country eligibility for the Millennium Challenge Account, a new foreign assistance program designed to provide additional aid to poor countries that achieve certain democratic standards and adopt free market economic reforms. In addition, Freedom House publishes annually *Freedom of the Press* (established in 1980), *Nations in Transit* (since 1995), which assesses conditions in the post-Communist world; and *Countries at the Crossroads*, a survey of governance, corruption, and transparency in sixty important countries. In 2005, Freedom House published two path-breaking studies. The first, *Survey of Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa*, identified and analyzed the institutions that contribute to gender inequality in the region. The second, *How Freedom Is Won*, identifies the tactics and forces which have most significantly contributed to democratic transitions over the past three decades. Through the Center for Religious Freedom, Freedom House produced a report on the presence of Saudi-government sponsored hate literature in some American mosques, and examined the impact of the imposition of extreme sharia law



Bette Bao Lord, chair of Freedom House, addresses a Tibet freedom rally across from the United Nations, in New York.

In the post 9/11 period, Freedom House expanded its on-the-ground presence to more difficult environments, such as in Central Asia and the Middle East. Since 2001, Freedom House has established an increasingly global presence through offices in Ukraine, Poland, Hungary, Bosnia, Serbia, Jordan, Mexico, and a number of countries in Central Asia. In both Ukraine and Serbia, Freedom House worked closely with local groups that were responsible for peaceful democratic revolutions. In Jordan, Freedom House worked to stem violence against women; in Algeria, it sought justice for victims of torture; in Uzbekistan, a brutal dictatorship, it sought to defend human rights advocates; in Venezuela, it worked with those seeking to protect and promote human rights in a difficult political environment.

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With the end of the Cold War, the Freedom House mission evolved to meet the new challenge of expanding freedom to societies under dictatorship and helping to stabilize free institutions in new, fragile democracies. Freedom House became more active on the issue of religious freedom. In 1995, the Puebla Institute was merged into Freedom House as the Center for Religious Freedom, and led advocacy efforts to bring issues of religious freedom into the mainstream of human rights work. The 1997 merger with the National Forum Foundation substantially enhanced Freedom House's capacity to conduct on-the-ground projects in fledgling democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the former Soviet Union. Through subgrants and targeted fellowships, Freedom House assisted these post-Communist societies in the establishment of independent media, non-governmental think tanks, and the core institutions of electoral politics. Although the Center for Religious Freedom separated from Freedom House in 2006, Freedom House continues to ensure that religious freedom remains a core part of its analysis, advocacy, and action portfolio.

Also in that time period, Freedom House took the leading role in a campaign to defeat a proposal, under debate in the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), to establish a New World Information and Communications Order, a measure that many saw as an opening wedge towards global censorship. The organization was involved in the defense of Andrei Sakharov and other Soviet dissidents. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, Freedom House established the Afghanisthan Information Center, a clearinghouse for information on the conflict. It was among the earliest supporters of Poland's Solidarity trade union. Responding to growing strife in Africa, Freedom House sent study missions to Zimbabwe and South Africa led by Bayard Rustin. It also sent missions to assess conditions in Central America during the 1980s, as part of an ongoing project to support centrist democratic forces, under siege from the Marxist left and the death squad right.



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Freedom House continues to serve as a leading advocate for policies to advance the democratic idea. It was a founder of the Community of Democracies, an alliance of global democracies that seeks a greater voice for democracy at the United Nations and other international forums. It supports critical reforms of the United Nations to make its work in human rights and democracy more effective. Freedom House speaks out for religious freedom for practitioners of all faiths, and the Center for Religious Freedom played a leadership role in creating the Coalition for Southern Sudan, whose advocacy efforts helped to lead to a peace agreement in that region, ending the longest running war in Africa.

Freedom House is a strong voice for a U.S. foreign policy that places the promotion of democracy at the forefront. Freedom House representatives regularly testify before Congress, provide briefings to Congress, the State Department, and other agencies, and argue the case for freedom at conferences, in op-eds and through media appearances.

Additional information on Freedom House and its history can be found at the **Freedom House Archives** of the Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library at Princeton University.

**Timeline:**

**1940's**

**November 10, 1941** - Freedom House founded by a group of prominent individuals, including Eleanor Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie

**June 1942** - Freedom House sends first appeal to Pres. Roosevelt, urging action against the Nazis for the "tragic increase in the brutalities perpetrated against the people of occupied Europe"

**1945** - William Agar proposes a formula for creating an enlarged U.N. -- urged the nations to form a commission on human rights to frame an international bill of human rights for all members of the U.N.

Eleanor Roosevelt, addresses a war-time rally.

Wendell L. Willkie, first co-chair of Freedom House with

**1947** - Freedom House urges NY Governor Dewey to take steps to combat discrimination by establishing a state university that would "accept all qualified students regardless of race, color or place of habitation"

**December 10, 1947** - UN General Assembly adopts the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was drafted under the leadership of Freedom House co-founder Eleanor Roosevelt

**1950's**

**1952** - Leo Cherne, an officer of Freedom House, debates Senator Joe McCarthy, on "Town Meeting On The Air," a popular radio forum, on how to deal with the communist threat

Freedom House issues statement asserting that McCarthyism has created an "atmosphere of fear and uncertainty" that damages "free expression" in the U.S.

**1955** - Balance Sheet of Freedom provides geopolitical assessments of political trends based mainly on anecdotal analysis, continues annually until the introduction of Freedom in the World.

**1958** - Eleanor Roosevelt presents Freedom Award to the Arkansas Gazette for reporting on U.S. civil rights issues

Freedom House sends a letter to Senator Lyndon Johnson supporting his civil rights legislation



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- Freedom House publishes Soviet Crimes: A Chronological Record and Famous Words of Freedom
- Freedom House Bookshelf instituted -- a program which distributed 3 million books over 28 years to citizens in developing countries
- 1960's**
- 1961** - Willy Brandt, Mayor of blockaded Berlin, received Freedom Award for his resistance to Nazism and Communism
- 1963** - Freedom House publishes *What's "Right" and "Left?"* which warns both ends of the political spectrum to recognize the dangers to democratic values posed by Fascism/ Nazism and Communism
- 1966** - Freedom House Board member Irving Kristol launches The Public Interest, initially as a Freedom House publication
- 1967** - Freedom House convenes 14 top Asian scholars to discuss issues related to U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, the report was seen as "a clear call for moderation," and is said to have helped persuade President Johnson to reduce forces in Vietnam
- 1970's**
- 1970** - Freedom House organizes international efforts to form a new organization, the International Council on the Future of the University (ICFU), focused on academic freedom, university governance and the role of universities in democratic societies
- First issue of Freedom at Issue (later renamed Freedom Review), a bi-monthly magazine that contained discussions of public policy questions related to freedom
- 1972** - First publication of a Map of Freedom, and the annual survey which became *Freedom in the World*, flagship of Freedom House publications on the state of freedom
- 1975** - Freedom House is one of the first organizations to call attention to mounting genocide in Cambodia, Board member Leo Cherner unsuccessfully pleads with the UN Human Rights Commission to launch an investigation
- 1976** - Freedom House becomes engaged in the battle against New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), an attempt within UNESCO by authorization regimes to authorize government control over the media
- Freedom House representatives regularly travel to South Africa to report on oppression of blacks under the apartheid systems, focused particularly on black journalists on the frontline of the struggle for equality. Helen Suzman serves on Freedom House advisory Board
- 1979** - First publication of *Freedom of the Press*, a global survey of media independence produced by Freedom House
- Freedom House delegation headed by Freedom House Trustee Bayard Rustin, monitors the first nationwide multiracial elections in then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), pioneering U.S. nongovernmental election monitoring efforts
- 1980's**
- 1980** - Freedom House organizes a hearing in Washington D.C. for Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and other Soviet Soviet leader
- Khrushchev, urging citizens not to seem naive, uninformed or easily deceived by the



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- 1981** - Freedom House sends representatives across the Pakistan border into Afghanistan to assess and publicize the conditions of the Soviet soldiers who were held as prisoner. Twenty prisoners were subsequently released to U.S. custody
- Freedom House Trustees urge increased funding for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, continuing Freedom House's support for international broadcasting
- 1981** - A bimonthly publication launched -- *Freedom Appeals: Documenting the Universal Struggle for Freedom* -- which included texts of documents written by political prisoners and dissidents whose voices were suppressed in their own countries
- 1982** - Freedom House observes elections in El Salvador, supports continued U.S. assistance, notes human rights abuses but also warns about long term threat to freedom from Communist insurgency
- 1985-88** - Freedom House sponsors a conference of Latin American leaders in Chile to take steps to open up the political systems in the region. Freedom House Executive Director is appointed as the only U.S. citizen to be a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- 1989** - National Forum Foundation (NFF) sponsors only U.S. delegation to observe elections in Poland
- 1990's**
- 1990** - NFF/FH brings first group of Visiting Fellows to the U.S. from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia.
- 1991** - Dalai Lama receives the Freedom Award, a continuation of the relationship Freedom House had with the Tibetan struggle for freedom that began when Freedom House facilitated the Dalai Lama's first trip to the U.S. in the 1980s
- 1993** - Freedom House opened an office in Ukraine to work for free and fair elections and to strengthen civil society
- President Bill Clinton delivers a major address at a Freedom House foreign policy conference, October 6, 1995.
- 1995** - First publication of *Nations in Transit*, an annual publication tracking democratic development in countries of the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe
- Freedom House Budapest office begins work on cross-border networks to support programs to send books, medicine and experts on democratic transitions to support democracy advocates
- Center for Religious Freedom becomes a self-sustaining division of Freedom House
- 1997** - Freedom House merged with National Forum Foundation
- 1998** - Freedom House's Center for Religious Freedom takes leadership role in pressing for enactment of the International Religious Freedom Act and begins Coalition for Southern Sudan. In 2005, the Center's leadership in the Coalition for Southern Sudan helped lead to a peace agreement in that region, ending the longest running war in Africa.
- 2000 - present**
- 2000** - First Community of Democracies meeting held in Warsaw, Poland; Freedom House cosponsors non-governmental forum with the Stefan Batory Foundation





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reform in Serbia, officially opens office in Belgrade

**2002** - Freedom House political rights and civil liberties are officially designated as key determinants of the Millennium Challenge Account

**2002-2004** - Freedom House opens offices throughout Central Asia, as well as in Nigeria, Jordan, Tunisia, and Mexico

**2003** - Freedom House establishes a local non-profit organization in Kyrgyzstan providing a printing press for independent publications throughout Central Asia

**2004** - First publication of *Countries at the Crossroads*, a new survey focused on democratic governance and rule of law in select countries

Special reports on Arab public opinion on women's rights as part of upcoming *Citizenship and Justice: A Survey of Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa*

During the Ukrainian elections, Freedom House assists in coordinating the first ever large scale regional civic monitoring effort working with a nascent regional network, mobilizing 1000 representatives from reform-oriented monitoring groups

**2005** - Freedom House's *Citizenship and Justice: A Survey of Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa* is published.

*How Freedom is Won*, a study showing how nonviolent civil action have fostered successful transitions to democracy over the last three decades, is published.

**2005-2006** - Freedom House sponsors conferences highlighting North Korea's human rights abuses in Washington, DC; Seoul, South Korea; Brussels, Belgium; and Rome, Italy.

**2006** - Uzbek Court Suspends Freedom House Human Rights Programs in Uzbekistan for six months as part of a broader crack-down on civil activism and non-governmental organizations.

Freedom House hosts a speech by President of the United States George W. Bush.

Center for Religious Freedom separates from Freedom House and relocates to the Hudson Institute.



Freedom House Chairman of the Board Peter Ackerman introduces President George W. Bush at a March 29th, 2006, speech.

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Today, Freedom House is a leading advocate of the world's young democracies, which are coping with the debilitating legacy of statism, dictatorship, and political repression. It conducts an array of U.S. and overseas research, advocacy, education, and training initiatives that promote human rights, democracy, free market economics, the rule of law, independent media, and U.S. engagement in international affairs.

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Over the years, Freedom House has been at the center of the struggle for freedom. It was an outspoken advocate of the Marshall Plan and NATO in the 1940s, of the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, of the Vietnam boat people in the 1970s, of Poland's Solidarity movement and the Filipino democratic opposition in the 1980s, and of the many democracies that have emerged around the world in the 1990s.

Freedom House has vigorously opposed dictatorships in Central America and Chile, apartheid in South Africa, the suppression of the Prague Spring, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, genocide in Bosnia and Rwanda, and the brutal violation of human rights in Cuba, Burma, China, and Iraq.

Freedom House is a clear voice for democracy and freedom around the world. Founded over sixty years ago by Eleanor Roosevelt, Wendell Willkie, and other Americans concerned with the mounting threats to peace and democracy, Freedom House has been a vigorous proponent of democratic values and a steadfast opponent of dictatorships of the far left and the far right.

Non-partisan and broad-based, Freedom House is led by a Board of Trustees composed of leading Democrats, Republicans, and independents; business and labor leaders; former senior government officials; scholars, writers, and journalists. All are united in the view that American leadership in international affairs is essential to the cause of human rights and freedom.

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